

By
Mike Whitesman

TONY HORSEMAN, a Wycombe legend after more than a decade as a hero of Loakes Park, is retiring.

'Bodger' confirmed his decision last night (Monday), when he told me:

"I'm packing up. I've had enough. I've had a good run, but now I've lost my zest and enthusiasm."

With that, Tony closed one of the most distinguished files in Wycombe's post war history. At 30 he ranks as a veteran after a career stretching from his debut appearance as a Wanderer in the 1960-61 season.

Since emerging into the big time via Wycombe Combination side, Wallaby Sports, goals have been his priority. Top Wycombe's scorer almost invariably during an uninterrupted stay, he headed the Isthmian League marksman's list on four separate occasions.

The player himself estimates his tally in competitive and friendly appearances must range between 400 and 500.

But what are the chances the Horseman file will ever be reopened?

Tony does admit the possibility is not completely out. "I don't know whether I'll change my mind later on," he said. But for the moment at least, it seems remote.

"Usually, I'm raring to go," admitted 'Bodger'. But not so this time; "I told Brian (Lee) at the end of last season I probably wouldn't bother this year."

Nonetheless Tony answered an S.O.S. to spearhead the attack in their opening friendly at Waterlooville—less than 24 hours after returning from a holiday in Bristol with his family.

He hadn't trained at all—"I



It's there . . . the goal that could have meant a fortune to someone. Wycombe's equaliser, crashed home by Alan Gane in the 46th minute, made the friendly with Altrincham a score-draw on pools coupons.

was stiff for three days afterwards."

'Bodger' is to keep in touch with the game, however. He has signed for Lawood Athletic in their first attempt at the Wycombe Sunday League's Premier Division crown.

It is unlikely he will appear regularly in the line-up skippered by ex-Wanderers colleague, Geoff Anthony. "But, I might play a couple of times."

Meanwhile from Horseman the player, he now reverts to Horseman the spectator, when not involved in decorating at his new home in Hethercroft Road, Downley.

Each and every supporter who saw the goal hungry maestro at work remembers many a magical deed. But Tony stores his own memories of the Loakes Park crowd. His tribute came in just two words—"great, terrific."

The Horseman saga covers a succession of managers through the '60's. He departs as current boss, Brian Lee prepares the squad for an assault on the Isthmian League hat-trick.

Twenty-eight competitive

goals last season made him second only behind Keith Searle, his partner in the most potent striking team in the League. His was a key contribution to Wanderers' title success.

Yet Horseman's start under Lee, after Barry Darvill's resignation in December '68, rated less than auspicious. He quit the club, then quickly rejoined—and waited out a seven day club ban before getting back down to the business at hand.

Tony retires however with words of praise for the managerial team of Lee and assistant John Reardon, which converted him from pure striker to the dual role of midfield-attack.

Although he scored fewer goals as a result, he maintains: "They probably made me a better player than what I was."

Either way, Tony's record over the years speaks for itself—as do the many County caps, representative appearances for F.A. and Isthmian League XI's, and his 45 minutes for Great Britain's Olympic hopefuls against West Germany in '66.

Luckily, Wanderers possess a like replacement in Micky Holifield.

Embarking on his second season since joining Wycombe from Oxford City, Mick showed plenty of dash for little reward in Saturday's 1-1 friendly draw with Altrincham at Loakes Park.

He hit a post, and also had a "goal" disallowed by referee Bill Cleere for blatant offside shortly before half time.

Wycombe in fact trailed to a 15th minute penalty goal by ex-Skelmersdale star, Alan Wolfe

—conceded after 'keeper John Maskell had been forced to trip centre forward Andy Windsor as he ran through onto a short measured backpass by John Delaney.

With both defences efficiently containing the rival attacks, neither Maskell nor his counterpart, Peter Frankish were ever overloaded with work.

The match featured an abundance of clever build up, but a distinct shortage of forward power from both camps. As such it never attained great heights in excitement.

Ultimately a shock goal by newcomer Alan Gane—thundering the ball home from well out

on the right after a cleared corner within seconds of the resumption—sealed the result as a score draw on Pools coupons.

Gane did enough in midfield on Saturday to make fans keen to see more of him. The same applies to the other new faces on view — Gerry Olsen from Maidenhead, Welsh amateur international Barry Davies from Leatherhead and Phil Wood from St. Albans.

The latter though retired after 60 minutes to receive two stitches on a cut below his left eye.

All four of the 'aliens' would make highly useful signings, particularly should Wood and Olsen be ready to vie for the defensive spot vacated by Ted Powell.

Whether or not they'll start the season proper as Wanderers is a matter for time to tell. Wood, who signed in close-season for Southern League Wealdstone, has previously played a mid-week friendly for Enfield.

The blond-haired Gane recorded one fleeting Floodlight

League appearance for the Blues in the past, but was not attached to any one club in particular during his three year stay at Borough Road College. He is however ex-Slough and was the unused substitute for Sutton when they lost to North Shields in the 1969 Amateur Cup final.

Now 22, he is taking up a teaching appointment at Ashford Grammar School, having recently been with British Universities on their tour of Rumania.

John Delaney, John Maskell and Keith Searle all returned from holiday, to make their first appearance. But Larry Pritchard did not arrive back from Greece in time to play against Wycombe's Northern Premier League opposition.

Sadly Delaney hit early trouble, and is added to an injury list already including Johnny Hutchinson (badly twisted ankle in training), and Paul Birdseye (back injury after the Waterlooville match).

He suffered a badly swollen ankle in the first half on Saturday and misses the final dress rehearsal at home to Bedford tonight (Tuesday, 7.30 p.m.).

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; I. Rundie, D. Bullock, P. Wood (sub: D. Bullock, 60 mins.), K. Searle (sub: G. Olsen, half-time), B. Davies (sub: T. Wainright), Gane, K. Searle, M. Holifield, R. Williams.

ALTRINCHAM: P. Frankish; S. Allan, D. Mobley, A. Wolfe (sub: G. Heathcote, 69 mins.), J. Owens, D. Coutts (sub: Maidenhead), Unsorth, J. Todd (sub: J. Cooke, 24 min.), B. Morley.

Referee: Mr. W. Cleere (High Wycombe).

Half-time: 0-1. **Goalscorers—**

Wycombe—Gane (46). Altrincham—

Wolfe (15 pen.).